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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL AND SECURITY COORDINATION MEETINGS:

PALAVER HOURS

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: A roughly six-hour January 23 meeting of the CIAT with the President and Vice Presidents produced little other than a renewed demonstration of how difficult it is for the Transition Government to function. A January 25 session of the Mixed Commission on Security was also long, but did cover a number of important pending issues. Significant real-world positive impact of the discussion, however, will most certainly require additional follow-up. End summary.

CIAT/Espace Presidentiel

¶2. (C) The sixteen member Chiefs of Mission of the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (known by its French acronym, CIAT) met for almost six hours with President Kabila and the four GDRC Vice Presidents (the Espace Presidentiel) January 23. Independent Election Commission (CEI) President Malu Malu and other CEI officials were invited for a portion of the meeting; Defense Minister Onusumbo participated in that portion dealing with security issues. Presidency staffers Ghonda and Cishambo were also present.

¶3. (C) CIAT members wished to focus on encouraging Espace members to use their influence to obtain rapid parliamentary adoption of a pending critically-needed election law, to review GDRC salary and budget questions, and to discuss security sector issues. Instead, over half of the nearly six-hour-long meeting was devoted to an attack by Vice President Bemba on the operations director of the CEI. Following a summary presentation by Malu Malu and some initial discussion, Bemba launched into an unexpected diatribe that the operations director had been improperly selected (note: the official has been in office for over a year. End note). Waving a copy of the CEI recruiting and hiring guidelines, Bemba asserted that if the CEI and international community would not respect their own legal texts, the election process itself would be open to question. Malu Malu defended the official, observing that his work had been good, and his original selection approved by the entire CEI board, including the representative of the MLC, Bemba's party. Several CIAT members attempted to move on, observing that in the absence of any background information, the question needed further study. At different points, Vice Presidents Ruberwa and Z'Ahidi made statements vaguely sympathetic to Bemba in the apparent hope of pushing forward through conciliatory statements. Bemba would have none of any of it, repeatedly asserting that nobody was willing to address his question as to why legal texts were being ignored. Kabila, unwilling or unable (or both) to assert control, after more than three hours finally suggested tossing the ball to the CIAT, proposing the CIAT take 72 hours to examine the issue and prepare a response to the Espace. Kabila appeared annoyed when CIAT members did not respond enthusiastically. Eventually, CIAT members agreed to study the issue.

¶4. (C) During the discussion, Ruberwa made several attempts to support a proposal to reopen general voter registration in response to the opposition party UDPS' latest condition for it to participate in the elections. As Ruberwa ruefully observed in a later private meeting with the Ambassador, he received no support for the idea from anyone present. There was also some discussion about the CEI's latest registration totals and work plans. There was little discussion of the pending electoral law.

¶5. (C) In a postscript, following a brief January 24 discussion, the CIAT prepared a letter to the Espace Presidential members reaffirming the CIAT's support of the CEI, its independence and its work demonstrated to-date, concluding that the internal personnel issue did not appear to be a legitimate focus of concern outside of the independent commission's jurisdiction, and reiterating the importance and urgency of the electoral law. The British Ambassador reported separate conversation(s) with Bemba in which Bemba, apparently realizing he had gone too far, said that he had perceived some possible hostility from CIAT

members. The British Ambassador reportedly told him that in fact all the CIAT members viewed his performance very negatively. Bemba asked the CIAT response be delayed until Bemba discussed the matter further within the Espace. The CIAT declined and sent the already-drafted letter January 25.

16. (C) The remaining hours saw the somewhat spent meeting participants discussing the other agenda items, albeit

without any meaningful decisions or results. At minimum, CIAT members were able to emphasize the importance attached to issues of good governance, the critical need for better support to FARDC troops and deployed units, and concerns regarding various other issues related to the security sector.

17. (C) Comment: Subsequent discussion confirmed that nobody other than Bemba had heard anything about problems regarding the CEI operations director, and there was much speculation about Bemba's motives. Possibilities included previous work the CEI official had done as part of presidency staff, possible earlier assistance the official (a lawyer by training) may have rendered to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its investigation of abuses in northeastern DRC possibly implicating Bemba, or Bemba's own deteriorating political position. The latter focused on whether Bemba was seeking to lay the groundwork for possible withdrawal from the electoral process, a premise seemingly contradicted by his subsequent attempt to forestall the CIAT letter and Bemba's recent nomination as his MLC party's presidential candidate. Otherwise, it was simply Bemba at his obstinate worst. The hours of fruitless discussion did, however, provide a rather graphic demonstration of how difficult it can be within the awkward structures of the Transition Government to reach meaningful conclusions and decisions.
End comment.

Security Mixed Commission

18. (C) The Mixed Commission on Security met January 25 to review various aspects of police and military programs. The Commission is chaired by Vice President Ruberwa and includes Ministers and other senior GDRC officials dealing with police and military issues, the military integration program, and DDR, as well as a large representation of Ambassadors and other senior representatives from the international community also involved in this area. The notable absentees from the January 25 meeting were the Angolan Embassy and the senior FARDC officer, Chief of Staff General Kisempia. Both absences are consistent with past practice as neither usually participates in the Security Mixed Commission sessions.

19. (C) The Mixed Commission agenda was centered on delays still being experienced in the military integration process, and substantial discussion was devoted to problems regarding efficient use of chartered World Food Program planes (vs. commercial charters) to transport combatants to orientation centers to begin processing, deployment and other logistics issues, and related coordination problems and delays in the DDR process. The ongoing military census initiative was also reviewed during the discussions, and the group endorsed rapid implementation of the European Security Mission (EUSEC) report to effect major financial and administrative reforms within the FARDC. Ongoing FARDC discipline and other problems were also discussed, including developments in North Kivu by insurgent FARDC troops. Vice President Ruberwa confirmed that the former 5th Integrated Brigade commander had been removed from North Kivu, and implicitly confirmed the former commander's incompetence contributing to the current problems by discussing the need for better selection of good commanders of the new integrated brigades. Various other specific military issues were also covered, along with a general review of the progress do-date of police training, deployments, and reform activities.

10. (C) The headline of the morning came when Presidency Military Advisor General Kalume reported that President Kabila had signed orders confirming that Republic Guard (also known by the former name as GGSP, or Presidential Guard) soldiers are to be treated as others in the FARDC, subject to integration or DDR processing. This had long since been an issue of concern, with GSSP units increasingly regarded as a de facto separate force, reporting only to the Presidency and dominated by Katangans. Kalume did not provide details of how or when GSSP soldiers are to report to orientation and processing centers, a subject that will require follow-up.

11. (C) Comment: The meeting lasted several hours and in fairly typical fashion often went into considerable detail regarding aspects of the ongoing police and military reform programs. Somewhat better in tone than the previous meeting, held in December 2004, integration and DDR program officials and others offered reports of at least some efforts being taken to overcome delays and the ever-present coordination

issues. The tone of the meeting was relatively non-contentious. As always, however, recommendations and

plans will need strong follow-up, as otherwise stated positive intent tends not to get translated into timely action. Kisempia's habitual absence is not as serious as it might seem, as his leadership of the FARDC is largely ineffectual in any event. While it often becomes somewhat tedious, the Commission continues to provide a useful if not unique forum for all the interested players in the GDRC and international community to review problems and plans together. End comment.

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